

# Bobcat

## Description:

The bobcat, sometimes referred to as the red lynx, is the smallest member of our native cats and the only species to have a white tip on the underside of its six-inch short or "bobbed" tail, giving the animal its name.

## Besides the Tail

Besides looking for the short tail with a white underside, there are several other identifying characteristics of the bobcat. The coat varies from an intense reddish-yellow brown with grey to an almost brownish grey. Numerous small dark spots are dispersed over its thick fur. The spots located in the area of the backbone often overlap resulting in what appears to be a stripe on its back.

Other distinguishing characteristics of the bobcat include long legs, a ruff of facial fur on the cheeks, and slight tufts of hair rising from the tips of each of its large ears. The bobcat's size varies greatly depending on where it lives. The smaller build and lighter coloration occurs throughout its southern range. The male bobcat is usually larger than the female.

## What's a Lynx?

The lynx (*Lynx canadensis*) is a close relative to the bobcat but lives in the northern regions of North America. It has been mistaken for a bobcat on many occasions. However, the tail of the lynx is brownish or pale white and ends in a black tip that completely encircles the tail. Lynx tracks are larger than the bobcat's and are actually closer to the size of a mountain lion's track. The tracks of a bobcat are more rounded than a coyote or dog and show no claw marks.

## Habitat

The bobcat lives in a wide variety of habitats including forests, deserts, mountains, swamps, and farmland. Bobcats can range from the forests of southern Canada to the hot arid regions of the southwestern United States and Mexico. During the day, they prefer to rest in their dens which can be in rock crevices or caves, in hollow trees or logs, or in thickets that provide protection and cover.

The female bobcat is territorial, staking out a home range marked with urine, scent from anal glands, and feces deposited on the ground. Male territories frequently overlap those of other males and usually contain the territories of a number of females. The availability of food usually determines how much overlap may occur throughout these boundaries.

## Diet

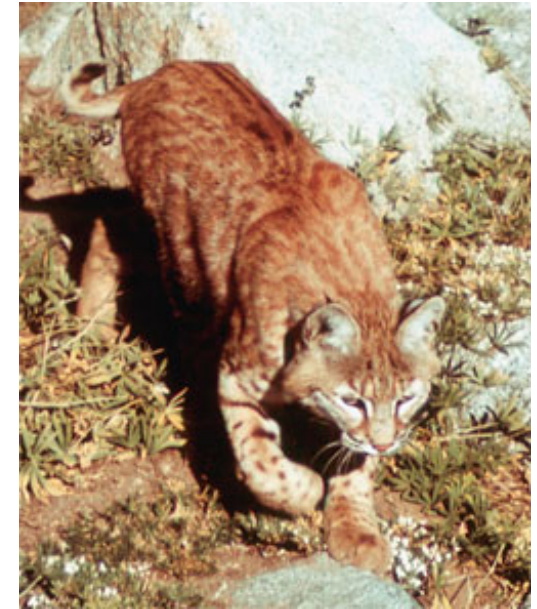
The bobcat is a secretive predator rarely observed by humans since it is usually nocturnal (most active at night). The bobcat is a carnivore and eats a wide variety of small mammals with the most common prey item being the cottontail rabbit. Occasionally the bobcat will kill larger prey like deer, or feast on the remains of already dead animals.

## A Well Adapted Hunter

A bobcat has a couple of different hunting techniques depending on the size of its prey. All methods include a pounce from the bobcat with a camouflaged coat allowing the bobcat to hide in a bush and pounce. Soft pads on the feet help bobcats to sneak up on an animal quietly. When stalking prey, they put their back feet in the same spots where their front feet stepped so they don't make so much noise by snapping extra twigs under their feet. Once they have pounced, bobcats use their sharp claws to hold the animal and then kill their prey by biting the animal's neck. Predators of the bobcat include mountain lions, coyotes, wolves and humans, who use their fur.

## Reproduction and Offspring

The bobcat mates in late winter to early spring. After about 65 days, two to four kittens weighing only one pound each are born in a isolated den with their eyes closed. The kittens first venture from the den at the age of five weeks. By nine months, they become more independent and venture out to establish territories of their own.



Bobcat  
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Footprint

*No Map*  
Distribution Map

1. **Species:** Bobcat
2. **Scientific Name:** *Lynx rufus* or *Felis rufus*
3. **Population:**
4. **Size:** Weight: Male: Average: 21 lbs.  
Range: 14 to 40 lbs.  
Weight: Female: Average: 15 lbs.  
Range: 9-33 lbs.  
Height (to shoulder): 2 feet
5. **Diet:** Cottontail rabbits, birds, reptiles, small mammals, and carrion.
6. **Young:** 2-4 per year; called kittens.
7. **Lifespan:** 10-12 years.
8. **Taxonomy:** Kingdom: Animalia  
Phylum: Chordata  
Class: Mammalia  
Order: Carnivora  
Family: Felidae
9. **Hunted In Idaho:** No
10. **Hunting Link:**